



Department of Justice

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 2, 2005
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CRM
(202) 514-2008
TDD (202) 514-1888

FEDERAL COURT REVOKES U.S. CITIZENSHIP OF MICHIGAN MAN WHO PERSECUTED JEWS WHILE SERVING AS NAZI CAMP GUARD

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Assistant Attorney General Christopher A. Wray of the Criminal Division today announced that the U.S. District Court in Detroit has revoked the U.S. citizenship of Iwan Mandycz of Sterling Heights, Michigan, based on his participation in the persecution of Jewish civilians during World War II while serving as an armed guard at two SS-run slave labor camps in Nazi-occupied Poland.

“This ruling sends an important message that the United States will continue to seek justice for victims of Nazi persecution,” said Assistant Attorney General Wray. “The passage of time will not deter the government from this solemn duty.”

In a decision filed today following a June 2004 trial in Flint, U.S. District Judge Paul V. Gadola, citing captured Nazi documents located by the U.S. government in archives in Europe, found that Mandycz, 85, served in 1943 as an armed guard of prisoners at the Trawniki and Poniatowa SS labor camps, where Jews were interned, exploited as slave laborers, and then murdered. He ruled that Mandycz assisted in Nazi-sponsored acts of persecution while serving “in a unit dedicated to exploiting and exterminating civilians on the basis of race or religion.”

Office of Special Investigations (OSI) Director Eli M. Rosenbaum stated, “Tens of thousands of people were tortured and killed in these diabolical facilities.” He added, “By standing guard to enforce the inmates’ confinement under horribly inhumane conditions, Mandycz helped ensure their systematic degradation and then their mass murder.”

The Trawniki SS Training Camp was established by Nazi Germany to prepare Eastern European recruits to assist German personnel in implementing the Nazi campaign to annihilate Jews in Poland. Judge Gadola found that after training and serving as a guard of Jews at the adjacent Trawniki slave labor camp, Mandycz served as an SS auxiliary and armed guard at the SS Labor Camp Poniatowa. On Nov. 4, 1943, while Mandycz was serving there, SS and German police personnel shot to death all of the prisoners at Poniatowa – some 14,000 Jewish men, women and children, all murdered in a single day. The SS gave this killing action the macabre code-name “Operation Harvest Festival.” The court noted that Mandycz “remained assigned to the camp as the bodies were burned” and that he was part of a guard contingent that was transferred later in November 1943 to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

In 1949, Mandycz obtained a U.S. immigration visa in Salzburg, Austria, and entered the United States. The court found that Mandycz lied to U.S. officials to obtain his visa, falsely claiming that he had spent the war working on his parents’ farm in Poland and then as a forced laborer in Austria. He became a naturalized U.S. citizen in 1955.

The proceedings to denaturalize Mandycz were instituted in April 2000 by OSI and the U.S. Attorney’s Office in Detroit. The case, which was tried by OSI Senior Trial Attorneys Hillary A. Davidson and Jonathan C. Drimmer, is a result of OSI's ongoing efforts to identify, investigate and take legal action against participants in Nazi persecution who reside in the United States. Since OSI began operations in 1979, it has won cases against 98 individuals who assisted in Nazi persecution. In addition, more than 170 individuals who sought to enter the United States in recent years have been blocked from doing so as a result of OSI's “Watch List” program, which is enforced in cooperation with the Department of Homeland Security.

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